

## Bodmin Moor Project 1997- Personal Diary by Stuart Randall

### Saturday 24th May

Arrive at Juliot Wells campsite, had a pint in the bar. I was pleased because it had a pool table and Murphy's on tap. I was allocated my caravan, number 31. I couldn't believe it, it has a telly, a proper toilet, shower, fridge, freezer, and one double bedroom and another with two beds. The caravan is far more equipped than I thought it would be. Ordered some chips from the takeaway place and walked to Camelford for some milk and sugar for the morning. On the way back I met Sue and went back to one of the other caravans to met everybody else. Came back and settled in and went to bed for a busy day tomorrow.

### Sunday 25th May

Didn't sleep very well, I was absolutely freezing. Up at 8:45, had to go off at 9, I didn't even have time to finish my Weetabix so I left them in the fridge. Got a lift to the site, left the cars and walked for about half an hour across the moor to the site. Had a tour around the area, I could not believe the volume of stones that were around. Leskernick hill (or should I say, Stannon Down) is just littered covered in large granite stones on the southern side. At first they look like a group of stones but once we got a closer look they resembled hut circles, walls, stone circles and enclosures. They became more and more apparent as my thoughts were provoked by the 'guides' Chris (Tilley) and Barbarra. Saw Brown Willy for the first time, a prominent landmark in Cornwall. What I found difficult to imagine is how some of the large stones were moved, some of the stones are enormous.

After lunch, I joined Mike (S), the supervisor of Hut 23. I helped remove some of the turf and top soil from the area to be excavated. I thought I had forgotten a lot of what I learnt on my first dig but today's activities brought a lot of it back. Once the turf was removed I cleared up the site and stashed the tools in a suitable/safe place. Our first find was made late in the day. A Mesolithic flint flake was found but unfortunately in last years' backfill, so we have no way of knowing where it came from.

### Monday 26th May

Today has seen a change. Two others have arrived at the caravan, Gary and Keriand I have also moved rooms. Much to the better I say, as I now have a double bed to myself. The last room was small, with two small beds and was only a place to sleep and the curtains remained shut so it was a room removed from the world. It feels good to get back to Cornwall, it was nice to get back for a couple of days before coming here, it was time to leave London and the fast way of life.

My work at the site today involved mattocking the surface and removing the backfill. I did my first bit of trowelling today, removing the soil from around a stony area in one corner of the hut. I was asked to fill in some thoughts in the site notebook for the hut I'm working in. Sue later said that my entry was quite good, which I was pleased about because I wasn't sure what to write and just compiled some thoughts of the site in general.

I got out of bed very early today, 7:45, the earliest I've got up since leaving school. The two days so far have been very tiring but I have managed it surprisingly well. I haven't had as much trouble getting up as I thought I would. Leaving at 8:15 sounded like murder yesterday but it was fine once I was up.

The hat has taken up permanent residence on my head. Two people have commented that it was nice but it has an absolutely vital use as it sheilds my head from the sun and the hot weather we have had so far. It also reminds me of good times,

Glastonbury where I bought it and my last, and only, excavation where it saved me again from bad sunstroke.

I didn't socialise as much as last night. I went to the bar for a pint, sat outside, it was cold and the band began to play 'Eye of the Tiger' very badly so I left with the original intention of retrieving Mike (S)'s notebook. I went and saw Mike(W) and Tony and sat and chatted about the diaries. They provoked some good thoughts especially concerning the interaction between the members of the project. I didn't really think about it at first but now I think about it a lot more especially as I know everybody better. Left Mike and Tony's caravan with some good thoughts but promptly forgot them when I got back to the caravan to write this.

My main woory as usual is financial, as it has been for the last two months. Luckily, the owner of the caravan site has agreed to amend my bill because of my unexpectedly shorter stay. This will at least give me a few more quid to ease my worries just a little.

I'm not trying to get too settled in to the caravan situation because I know at Bignor, where we are camping, the facilities will not be as good as here. I don't want to take things like a proper toilet, a shower and a telly for granted as I didn't really expect them before I came.

### Tuesday 27th May

Getting up today was an absolute nightmare, I got up at 7:20am and left at 8. Weather wasn't quite as nice as the previous two days.

The trench is coming along well. I did a lot of work in the stony corner so trowelling was quite difficult. I removed alot of the backfill from behind the large stones outside of the hut circle, the middle area of the trench, inside the hut circle, seems to be where the focus of the excavation is and where the interesting features are coming through.

The community atmosphere in our caravan is much better, Gary and Keri have added to the atmosphere in our caravan. It was difficult, if not intense, with just two of us to start with. The cooking duties are shared and we all do our bit without too much effort. The atmosphere is good, so much so that Lesley has begun to sing, albeit along with her walkman and very badly too. I've hardly listened to any music since I've been here which is strange because I listen to alot of music and maybe emphasis how out of the usual routine this is. At home I listen to music all the time but here I only listen to music on the way to the site. Today, Chris's Blues snapped me out of my tiredness and woke me up in time for the trek across the Moor, although, I prefer the Charlatans and Oasis that we listened to in Tony's car.

The significance of this diary is becoming more and more apparent. Discussions, especially during breaks, are often about the diaries and how different members of the project have approached them. I think it is important to record what I have done during the day and importantly thoughts and impressions of the site.

### Wednesday 28th May

Getting up was hard again today but a little easier than yesterday as I had quite an early night, but, I still could have done with a few more hours, roll on Saturday. This morning it was really windy at the site which made it cold and difficult to work, especially as dust was constantly blowing in your eyes, which I found extremely irritating. This morning, because of the weather and my tiredness, I became short tempered but on our side of the settlement we were sheltered from the wind as the morning progressed. I've started working on a new part of the trench, a part that was not excavated the previous year so as I



mattocked and trowelled the layers away I was a little more excited as nobody knew what was underneath.

I got another early morning dose of the Blues and more suicidal sheep ran in front of the car. In the afternoon I carried on working in the same area. I removed more peat and soil and a group of stones started coming through and as they were the same size and context Mike (S) thought perhaps they might be a feature but more work will have to be done on them. At the end of the day I jotted down a few notes for my fieldnote book. It was good because i really started thinking about the site and the work has progressed very well. Mike (S) and Sue came along later and pointed out the feature, which is covered by a paving stone, and I was able to get down some good notes. Now it is just down to when I can be bothered to write them down in my notebook. I was really getting into it when Mike (S) reminded me that Chris would probably be waiting and as i walked across the Moor I had some really interesting thoughts going through my head.

Watched the football in the evening and found out that Chris is a big football fan, I'll have to talk to him about that, football is one of the few things I can hold a long conversation about. Gary cooked a great dinner, spaghetti and peppers with a great sauce, I did the washing up. The cooking and washing up is particularly shared well.

#### Thursday 29th May

This morning was different because sue has gone back to London for a few days and Mike (S) was buying a ladder. We have also moved from the 'spiritual' area of Hut 28.

As Mike (S) wasn't here I worked in Chris's trench removing soil from an area behind the hut circle using a mattock and trowel. During the morning break Helen asked for help on her cairn. It was interesting to work on such a small area compared to the hut circles and Helen believes there could well be some interesting finds. I excavated the hollow in the middle, the cairn is divided into quadrants and each is excavated individually although some are left to give a good context record. Helen also believes that the cairn has also been robbed but they could have left behind pieces of pottery and other artefacts. In the last part of the afternoon I helped Mike in Hut 23 to clean the site with a pair of scissors and brush. Mike (S) asked if I had any objections to the tasks he was

giving me , which felt strange as I felt almost like I didn't need to bother doing the task but Mike (S) is the supervisor and I carry out whatever task he gives me to do, he has after all done alot more excavating than I have and has a lot more excavating experience than I have. Mike (S) is extremely thorough about everything in the trench which is good because he is passing on to me very good techniques and it is very good to learn from somebody as disciplined as Mike (S) and not a haphazard excavator who would pass on bad habits.

We had a meeting in caravan 41 this evening, organised by Mike (W) to talk about his questionnaire and the diaries. The diaries add an extra element to the social aspect of the dig, everybody is aware of them and many times people have said, for instance "Don't put that in your diary" because they are aware of the significance of some events and conversations which will probably be recorded in peoples diaries. I had many things to write up today, many of which have escaped me and I had discussed them with Mike on leaving the site and he said that he hoped that I would mention these in my diary but only a few of the things I can remember. One of the topics was the slowly escalating antagonism between Lesley and Keri, it probably comes from sharing a room, they both argue about who snores in the night and I try not to listen when they moan about each other to me.

Another thing I discussed with Mike was the socialising amongst the group - particularly the supervisors and especially Sue. Never before have I socialised with one of my lecturers or teachers before and I am only use to seeing them in college/school time only but at university it is different. I guess I expected the more important members of the project to distance themselves from the 'diggers' but this is not the case.

I talked to Mike (S) the supervisor and Mike (W) about photography, Mike (W) mentioned some interesting photographic projects which sounded particularly interesting. I have photographed some of hut 23 and some of the landscape but would like to try it with a decent camera instead of my automatic but some photographic projects involving the landscape sounds very interesting as the landscape is absolute beautiful in these parts.

We went to a nice pub on the way home, The Rising Sun, Lesley and I played pool five times. I won three times so that just about puts me ahead in our contest but Lesley is a match for my pool skills and the matches tend to be



evenly matched. I was hounded by Chris for being beaten by a woman but Lesley is a good player and I'm not exactly the world's greatest player.

### Friday 30th May

As has been the case all week, getting up was difficult but again I just about made it.

When I arrived at the site Mike (S) wanted someone to help clean his trench, which isn't exactly the best job in the world, and it was a toss up between Mike (W) and myself. I called 'heads' and went and helped Mike with his clearing up. The wind had got up today so cleaning was a nightmare.

After my break I helped Mike (S) arrange the photographs by positioning scales and recording the photographs taken in the site notebook. Had a late lunch about 2 and walked down to the stream at the bottom of the hill, it was interesting to get a view of the site from another angle.

Today I have felt tired all day and have remained pretty quite. At least tomorrow is our day off so I'll sleep all day. In the afternoon I tidied up the site even more and carried on helping Mike (S) with the photography. Later, Mike and I were going to do some work with the levels but time was against us and so he let me take one of the cameras and get some views of the site but unfortunately there was no film which was a shame because I would have liked to get some good indication of the end results.

Stopped off at the Rising Sun on the way home and played pool again. Decided to go home for the next day as family had come down and it would be my only opportunity to see them. Dad picked me up from the caravan site at 10:30 and took me back. It was strange being back with some of my friends, explaining our work to people in the most basic possible way was difficult because I usually did this to people who had some kind of archaeological background and I couldn't use the technical terms I was use to.

### Saturday 31st May

Didn't make the most of my lie in and got out of bed at the horrendously late hour of ten o'clock. Had breakfast in a cafe in Perranporth with two of my friends and drove up to the cliffs at Perran and back in St. Agnes. The views are spectacular you can see down to St.Ives and up to Holywell Bay and Newquay.

When I got back my cousins had arrived for their holiday. Unfortunately i won't get to see them again but at least I got to see them a bit, it was after all the main reason why I left the caravan site for the night, went down to the pub in the evening.

#### Sunday 1st June

Today has been the worst possible day and I have ruined my hard work and my relationship with the rest of the group.

I didn't make it back to the caravan park last night or early this morning and woke up with a blazing hangover and therefore missed a days work at the site. I'm disappointed and annoyed with myself as I have let down Sue, Mike(S) the rest of the group and most of all myself. I now feel a bit isolated from the rest of the group.

#### Monday 2nd June

Today I suffered because of my AWOL antics of yesterday, but, and I felt my punishment for missing a days work was lighter than I expected.

Work started at the usual time and the weather was very overcast and unpromising. I started in hut 23 with Mike (S), who I thought was going to give me all the shit jobs but didn't, trowelling back layers onto the iron pan. This was in the upper half of the middle trench where I haven't done much work.

However, after lunch the weather became a lot worse. I was trowelling in the rain which was a totally new experience for me as I have always trowelled when its been sunny.. Went to the pub on the way back and back at the caravan Mike (W) asked me a few questions about my questionnaire that I had filled out. He had some of his photos that he had taken of the site which were very interesting and my interest in photography is still healthy. After that we went back to the pub and on the final day I managed to save my reputation by beating Lesley at pool to win the contest. I was very tired and had it not been my last night I wouldn't have gone but I decided I had to go.

## Lesternick - Bodmin Moor Project 1997

I first heard about the project during my first excavation which was also in Cornwall just a few miles away near Liskeard. I tried to get on to the project before I was a member of the Institute but with no success. When the Student Fieldwork Bulletin was published in February of this year the project was listed and I immediately applied to go on it. Coming from Cornwall I am obviously interested in the archaeology of the county.

My first impressions of the site were one of astonishment at the amount of large granite stones. At first they didn't resemble anything to me but after the bar features such as huts and stone circles became visible. I knew I would have to write down my first impressions as I knew they would change by the end of my time on the project. I was very impressed with the views from Lesternick Hill, you can see for miles from the hill seeing Brown Willy, Rough Tor in certain places and the A30. Trying to visualise what the site <sup>have</sup> would look like in the Later Bronze Age was also something I tried to do but a greater depth of knowledge of the period would have helped. I can't imagine how the large granite stones that made up the hut circles, walls and stone circles were moved, they were enormous. I also imagined what the site would look like with no field/hedges, no animals and no modern road systems. It would be difficult to imagine what the site would look like (\*).

Looking back I really enjoyed the project. The site was great, the work enjoyable and the social group relaxed and comfortable. I liked the informal running of the project where everybody did their bit and moved around helping wherever was necessary. I have a lot to thank Sue for and especially Mike (S) who took the time to show



me methods and techniques that might not have been necessary but show me them anyway because of my lack of experience. It was good to learn from someone who is very thorough and disciplined and not someone who would teach me to cut corners and bad habits. Another aspect of the social group was that it felt very unified, I didn't necessarily feel insuperior to Sue and others, I felt as much a part of the group as anyone else.

The 'diaries' were a new experience for me. It is the longest I have ever kept a diary before. The first few entries were probably a bit thin but as the project progressed I had more to write and more thoughts about the project and its members. When I left the Bodmin project I still felt as if should be writing in my diary, it had become that routine and I really did enjoy doing it.

What has been changing recently is my thoughts towards archaeology. My thoughts have changed about my courses for next year and my career, as I enjoy archaeology more and more future employment still looks bleak. The main benefit, however, is that archaeology is so diverse, it consists of many things but the public's view of archaeology is still very limited, especially to the 'digging' aspect. Careers in archaeology remain limited. Next years' course and the fieldwork I have been doing has made me think more about my directions within archaeology. I am thinking of changing some of my courses and would like to have a more scientific element to the courses I'm doing in the second and third years.

Overall, I really enjoyed my time on the Bodmin project and would love to come back next year. I felt a lot more

\* For us, it is even difficult to imagine life without cars, <sup>electricity,</sup> televisions, stereos, video recorders and the thousands of household appliances that are supposed to make our lives easier.

- involved than I did on my first excavation. I put some of that down to my increased knowledge of archaeology after my first year and because of my study I understood and was interested a lot more. The informal running of the project was good and the relaxed atmosphere helped me learn at my own pace. Another aspect that I enjoyed a lot was the carrying out of methods I had done before and there was also time to experiment a little. The supervisors and directors were very helpful and gave us, the beginners, the right amount of supervision but also freedom to learn for ourselves. I believe I did quite well on the project apart from my one day's absence. I learnt a lot of new stuff but revised a lot of work that I had done before. The magical setting of Cornwall was also great, the site was very special and must have meant a huge amount to people in the past. I'm looking forward to seeing everybody from the project again and seeing the results of this year's research, it will be good to see the results of some of my photographs, hopefully they will fit together well and are a good representation of the site.